

'Only a Clerk,' Says State Dept.

By JAMES DOYLE

WASHINGTON — John Discoe Smith emerged in profile from a set of dusty personal records here Tuesday, and the State Department seemed calm over the prospect that one of its former employees may have defected to the Soviet Union.

"The beginning and end of his Federal employment was with the state Department as a communications clerk," said Robert J. McCloskey, deputy assistant secretary of state.

It took the State Department seven hours to come up with that information, an indication that government records have been carefully checked and that the department is confident there will be none of the embarrassment that have recently rocked the Soviets, the British and the West Germans because of high level defections.

The man described by Tass, the Soviet news agency, seemed decidedly more important than a communications clerk. He had attended naval academies, deciphered enemy codes for the Navy, attended George Washington University and then joined the State Department for work in the embassy in New Delhi, where he was promptly recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency for spy work. It was with the CIA that his disillusionment began, Tass reported.

But the Defense Department Tuesday reported that no man named John Smith from Massachusetts had ever attended the U.S. Naval Academy. The reference to

code breaking was too general to be meaningful, they said, and it would take a little time to find just what John Smith of Quincy did do during his service, even given his serial number.

George Washington University took only an hour to come up with information about Smith. Their records showed that a John D. Smith of Quincy had entered their freshmen liberal arts program in the Fall of 1948 from Thayer Academy in Braintree. In June of 1950, he had received a scholastic suspension. "That means he flunked out," a university spokesman said. The reason was poor grades.

State Department records picked up a John Discoe Smith of Quincy on Oct. 29, 1950, when he received appointment as a communications clerk at a yearly salary of \$2850. This John

Smith was born on Mar. 31, 1926, according to the State Department.

He spent almost all of his time working overseas. In January of 1951, he was assigned to the embassy at Pretoria, South Africa. In May, 1954, he was moved to New Delhi, India.

In 1955, the department said, Smith married another State Department employee, Mary Frances London, who was working as a foreign service secretary. She resigned in January of 1957 and a department spokesman said he believed she was still in the United States.

In 1959, the Smiths were reassigned to Vienna. On Dec. 27, 1959, again according to the State Department, Smith returned to the United States, and two days later he resigned from the department "for personal reasons."

He was at the time still carried in the position of communications clerk. Because of longevity pay increases, his salary had grown to \$5585 a year.

On Apr. 13, 1960, John Discoe Smith received a passport, his application noting that he planned travel in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland and Australia.